



Sites in Reuse

Reilly Tar and Chemical Corp. Superfund Site

Louisiana Street and Walker Street, St. Louis Park, Minnesota 55426



From left to right: A soccer field and recreation center, both at the new park; a baseball field and walking path; a storm water pond.

Site size: 80 acres

Site Reuses: The site is now home to condominiums and townhouses, a restaurant and bowling alley, an office building, and a recreational park with athletic fields, walking paths, recreation center, pond, playground, and parking lot.



INTRODUCTION

According to Scott Anderson, Superintendent of Utilities for the City of St. Louis Park, Minnesota, “everyone who grew up in the City remembers the smell of creosote” from the Reilly Tar and Chemical Corporation. The same Superfund site that was responsible for the pervasive creosote smell has been redeveloped, and now features townhouses, a new office building, and a park, complete with recreational fields, a playground, and walking trails.

SITE HISTORY

From 1917 until 1972, Reilly Industries operated a coal tar distillation and wood preserving plant in St. Louis Park, known as the Republic Creosoting Company. From 1917 until 1939, wastes containing coal tar and its distillation byproducts were discharged into a ditch that ran the length of the site. These wastes then flowed into a peat bog on the southern portion of the site. A wastewater treatment facility was installed in 1940, but Republic Creosoting Company continued to discharge contaminated waste into the peat bog for the duration of the Company’s operations at the site.

Coal tar and creosote dripping from leaky pipes, spilled process materials, and wood-treating chemicals washed off of treated lumber eventually resulted in contaminated

soil on the site. Chemical contaminants may have also been released from a waste pond in the southeast portion of the site. There were more than a dozen wells on the site, with depths varying from 50 to more than 900 feet. Republic Creosoting Company dumped creosote and waste materials down several of these wells, eventually contaminating the ground water. The City of St. Louis Park purchased the site from Reilly Industries in 1972. At the time, the State of Minnesota was suing Reilly Industries over pollution discharge issues. The sales agreement included a “hold harmless” clause for soil and water impurities, indemnifying the City from liability. Creosote and creosote wastes had migrated directly into four underlying aquifers, contaminating the ground water with polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons. The contaminants eventually spread to private wells and municipal ground water sources.

After acquiring the site in 1972, the City of St. Louis Park razed the Republic Creosoting Company buildings and constructed residential buildings on the northern end of the site over the next 8 to 10 years. A major north-south boulevard and storm water drainage improvements were also constructed. No redevelopment occurred on the site from 1984 until 2002, due to delays associated with a lack of a remediation plan for the site and the possibility that one

agency might require massive soil excavation and removal. Anderson said, “Fear of unknown remediation requirements coupled with an inability to stop generating data and start generating solutions were the biggest impediments to site redevelopment.” Beginning in 1978, the State of Minnesota shut down more than a dozen wells in the vicinity of the site, and the City of St. Louis Park instituted a water conservation program due to daily shortages of clean, drinkable water. In 1979, 28 multi-aquifer wells were either reconstructed or abandoned to prevent the spread of contamination in the ground water. By this time, many citizens in the community had become extremely concerned about the quality of drinking water. Organized public protests over water quality were not uncommon.

THE CLEANUP PROCESS

In 1982, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) provided funds to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) to clean out two contaminated wells. The site was listed on the National Priorities List in 1983. In 1984, a consent order was issued, requiring Reilly Tar, the potentially responsible party as owner and operator of the site, to construct a granular-activated carbon treatment plant for two existing contaminated municipal wells, restore drinking water, and contain the contaminant plume from contaminating other municipal wells.

After some delay, Reilly Industries came forward with a practical, cost-effective remediation plan that expedited the cleanup and reuse process. Reilly’s plan led to settlement of the lawsuit over liability and a 1986 agreement between all parties for remediating the site. Under the settlement, the City agreed to share the responsibility for operating and maintaining the municipal water treatment plants and performing long term ground water monitoring. Construction of the required pump and treat wells was finished in 1997. It is estimated that as of 1996, 6.2 billion gallons of contaminated ground water had been pumped and treated. Redeveloping the formerly contaminated property was important to the city’s growth as a Minneapolis suburb, primarily because St. Louis Park has little land available for new construction other than previously used property. Ultimately, a strong commitment to redevelopment and the local government’s willingness to take risks by investing in a contaminated property were key factors to overcoming impediments to reuse.



A playground at the new park in St. Louis Park, MN.

A NEW RECREATIONAL PARK

In 2002, the City built a new commercial office building and recreational park, in addition to the residential housing that was built before the site was cleaned up. The community was able to preserve a significant portion of green space, in addition to limiting unnecessary commercial or residential development. Community members enjoy walking trails, athletic fields, a new recreation center, and a pond that provides wildlife habitats. A local high school soccer team plays its games on the new fields. The site is now a place where community members can gather to enjoy the amenities that the City worked so hard to create.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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